



Climate Change Central

DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS BRIEF

EMERALD HILLS URBAN VILLAGE

a sustainable urban neighbourhood pilot project

Submitted By:

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DRAFT COMMUNICATION PLAN

1.0 THE PROJECT

The Emerald Hills Urban Village is a 20-hectare (50 acre) neighbourhood development located in the community of Sherwood Park, east of Edmonton, in the municipality of Strathcona County, Alberta. Through an innovative partnership between the municipality, developer, federal government and a university design centre, the site has been selected to become a pilot project for the development of a sustainable urban neighbourhood.

The Urban Village will comprise a mix of approximately 1000 housing units and will include townhomes and bungalows; multi-family condominium apartments; seniors' apartment housing; a long-term care facility; and commercial and retail space. With schools and parks close by, and by virtue of its mix of residential, care and commercial uses, the site is well-positioned to serve a wide range of individuals in a social environment that can support itself in a sustainable manner.

2.0 THE PARTNERS

The Municipality of Strathcona County has embraced sustainable development, creating an environment in which developer and administration can cooperate to advance neighbourhood-scale sustainability. Strathcona County is incorporating *The Natural Step* into its municipal framework; revising its Municipal Development Plan to incorporate sustainable development principles; and has broken ground on Centre in the Park, a town centre project incorporating energy conservation and sustainable development strategies into its design.

Christenson Developments was selected as the multi-residential builder for Centre in the Park and now leads the development of Emerald Hills Urban Village. With knowledge gained over 30 years, Christenson Developments takes the long view and works in partnership to ensure the needs of residents and the community will be served for generations to come.

The Sustainable Buildings and Communities group of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan-SBC) is committed to working with municipalities and developers to foster and institutionalize sustainable neighbourhood development. Emerald Hills Urban Village has been selected as the first NRCan-SBC Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN) pilot project, where the sustainability lens is applied to every aspect of the design and construction of the neighbourhood.

The Design Centre for Sustainability (DCS) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) has as a major research priority, the development of an holistic, design-oriented

and integrated tool palette that can be effectively nested within larger planning and design processes for sustainable community development.

One Planet Living (OPL) is a partnership between the BioRegional Development Group and WWF, aiming to demonstrate how to make the challenge of living on one planet achievable, affordable and attractive. Its goal is to establish OPL communities on every continent by 2009, based on the experience of the Beddington Zero fossil Energy Development (BedZED) in London, England.

Climate Change Central (C3) is a public-private, not-for-profit organization established by the Alberta government in 1999 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province. C3 works with industry, all levels of government and individual Albertans to encourage action on climate change through energy efficiency, the promotion of related technologies and the dissemination of federal and provincial policy information. C3 has offered communications, technical and strategic assistance to EHUV.

3.0 COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

Short-term (2006-07)

- Enable project partners to begin telling the story of the development of a sustainable urban neighbourhood to ensure ongoing community buy-in
- Ensure key audiences are aware of the ongoing development of Emerald Hills and see positive momentum
- Position EHUV as a leader in collaborative sustainable development between an Alberta municipality, developer and other key partners

Mid to Long-term (2008 and beyond)

- Position EMUV as a leading catalyst for the development of sustainable neighbourhoods, enabling successful replication in Alberta, Canada and internationally
- Showcase sustainable community and infrastructure innovations, and promote sustainable lifestyles as an on-going part of the development process

4.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS

Emerald Hills Urban Village is one of a handful of innovative developments currently in the planning and/or building process in Canada. Other “green” projects destined for former brown- or green-field lands, include Victoria’s Dockside Green and Selkirk Waterfront Community, Toronto’s King Liberty, Cambridge’s Millcreek by the Grand, Kitchener’s Kaufman Lofts, and Moncton Shop’s Project. Of these, Windmill Development’s Dockside Green has attracted considerable public attention due to the developer’s ongoing speaking engagements to key stakeholder audiences.

In Alberta, the Town of Okotoks has attracted considerable media and public awareness for its stated position as a leader in sustainable development (“Historic Past, Sustainable Future”). The town’s Drake Landing Solar Community has received the kind of community support, national presence and international recognition that can act as a communications model for Emerald Hills’ project proponents (despite the considerable infrastructure delays posed by Alberta’s record rainfall in 2005). In preparing this communication plan, Climate Change Central has drawn from Drake Landing’s experience in publicizing its project, thereby drawing local, national and international support.

4.1 UNIQUE POSITIONING POINTS

While there are many “green” development projects underway in Canada, Emerald Hills Urban Village has an opportunity to market itself as a model for holistic, sustainable neighbourhood development. Its unique attributes include:

- selected as the first NRCan-SBC Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN) pilot project, where the sustainability lens is applied to every aspect of the design and construction of the neighbourhood;
- innovative collaboration between a developer and local government, demonstrating how such cooperative approaches can advance neighbourhood-scale sustainability
- potential international involvement of One Planet Living as one of its first North American neighbourhood sites, bringing a long-term sustainable lifestyle focus to the project
- incorporating UBC Design Centre for Sustainability’s innovative urban design toolkit to engage community and spark public imagination
- fostering sustainable behavior through community-based social marketing.

As a result, Emerald Hills Urban Village has the potential to attract top-of-mind awareness for the value of sustainable planning and development, and serve as a catalyst to “jump start” similar neighbourhoods in Alberta, Canada, and internationally.

4.2 BARRIERS

Our research indicates potential confusion between Strathcona County’s current Centre in the Park project and the planned Emerald Hills initiative. The County may wish to develop an overarching brand to represent its vision for a sustainable future in every initiative it undertakes. The slogan connected to this branding concept should be visible in all its communication materials and signage. Please see Appendix 1 for a detailed brand analysis.

5.0 TARGET AUDIENCES

Local:

- Residents
- Government
- Businesses/trades
- Schools (all levels)
- Media

Surrounding Community:

- Edmonton residents
- Media
- Schools (all levels)
- Businesses/trades

Broader Scope:

- Alberta residents and schools (all levels)
- Canadian residents and schools (post-secondary)
- International
- Media
- Government (e.g. municipal leaders – Federation of Canadian Municipalities)
- Related trade associations (e.g. The Green Building Council)

6.0 KEY MESSAGES

TBD

7.0 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES & TACTICS

7.1 BUILDING PROFILE

1. Launch:

- Define objectives of the launch, for example:
 - create awareness of EHUV's vision and mandate
 - brand EHUV with logo/visual identity
 - promote understanding of how the project represents a leading example of collaborative sustainable neighbourhood development between an Alberta municipality, developer and other key partners

- stimulate and encourage industry, government and a network of progressive organizations to support and participate in sustainable neighbourhood development
- Develop a detailed program agenda, defining roles for MC, federal and provincial representatives, project partners, etc.
- Introduce key project partners – this will help increase the profile of the announcement, sending a positive message about EHUV’s ability to successfully leverage public funds and solicit the involvement of respected organizations in sustainable development
- define a formal media relations plan, for example:
 - coordinate media release with NRCan’s communication’s officer in minister’s office well in advance of the launch. Request a federal key-note appearance at the launch (minister, deputy minister, etc.)
 - distribute a media advisory at least two days in advance of the event and conduct follow-up calls the day before the event
 - compile and present a media kit to media attending the conference – distribute the kit via courier to those not in attendance immediately after the news conference. Media kits should include the news release, DVD copy of B roll material, backgrounder, partner brochures and any other relevant material
 - Distribute the news release via Canada NewsWire to all relevant daily and trade publications. Include a visual rendering of the project with the release; budget for a national release
- extend invitations to the news conference to key stakeholders/potential advocates. [Okotoks invited over 400 people to its launch at the Palliser Hotel; about 200 attended.]
 - allow space for Strathcona County, Christenson, related not-for-profits and industry to set up booths.
- Consider “paid” advertisements in related daily, trade and environmental publications to leverage news media coverage.

Launch timing:

There is potential to do both a national and local launch, but C3 would suggest waiting until the design charrette is complete before moving forward with a launch. Another event could then be organized when the project is complete for local media and a news release with b-roll and images distributed across Canada.

2. Develop animation of envisioned neighbourhood:

- The Town of Okotoks attributes much of the large media uptake of the Drake The Landing story to the preparation of an animation of the envisioned community which was integral to the launch (media were provided with a DVD of the animation, which was used extensively in television coverage) and on-going

website promotion. The animation was updated periodically and widely used at presentations and workshops.

- UBC's Design Centre for Sustainability might lend its urban planning software and expertise to the creation of an animated view of EHUV, which could highlight design and planning features, as well as lifestyle choices (car sharing, pedestrian-friendly streets, etc.). The DVD could be used extensively by Strathcona County and Christensen Developments in the promotion of the neighbourhood.

3. Website

- Effective and efficient outreach and communication will be a key element of building EHUV's profile. A website will serve as a:
 - portal to project information and documentation
 - vehicle for team communication (ideally, it should incorporate interactivity in the form of on-line forums, podcasting, etc.)
 - means to inform and engage stakeholders
 - medium for sharing information and expertise
 - venue for story-telling and technology transfer
 - bridge for building understanding between diverse groups and inspiring other communities to envision and implement sustainable options

4. Build profile with local and regional community

- on-going education about EHUV to ensure local buy-in and trust and confidence that the development will truly make a difference
 - self-guided tours that showcase sustainable building technologies/features
 - field-trip site for school groups
 - large running meter listing the amount of energy saved in the sustainable community, compared to that of a conventional development. Include financial, social and environmental benefits
 - engage post-secondary students in work-study programs, to ensure buy-in from upcoming professionals in interior design, architecture, building, engineering, etc.
- use show home to demonstrate sustainable components of the development
 - host educational seminars on energy/water efficiency in the home to educate potential homebuyers and general public
 - apply learnings from Alberta Ecotrust's *ecohome* in Calgary to see how they used stand-alone educational materials and weekend seminars to market the sustainable components of their homes to the public, building industry and realtors.
- Strathcona County could place recording devices around the community where people record their thoughts about the site, sustainability etc. These sound bites could then be used by Strathcona County in marketing materials and provide feedback on residents' attitudes about the project.

- Signage: Advertise Strathcona County’s commitment to sustainability along major roadways entering the community.
- Advertisements in “Homes” sections of newspapers will draw residents of Edmonton and surrounding area.

7.2 POSITION EHUV AS A LEADER

- Build overall profile by placing spokespeople in high-profile public venues, i.e. industry conferences, environmental conferences (GLOBE), urban planning events/workshops, working groups, etc.
 - develop a calendar of opportunities, including dates, audiences, contact information, etc. Assess the opportunity in terms of speaker vs. participant (networking)
 - seek speaking engagements at conferences/meetings for spokespeople
 - develop tailored (audience specific) PowerPoint Presentations for speaking engagements.
- Position EHUV and its spokespeople as “sustainable urban neighbourhood development” leaders and **the** credible source of information on this topic.
 - identify new leadership opportunities for key spokespeople, including by-line opportunities and speaking engagements
 - research appropriate publications for key by-line opportunities and editorial placement
 - implement a monitoring service to receive all coverage

7.3 POSITION EHUV AS AN INDUSTRY INFLUENCER

- Climate Change Central would consider developing a manual, based on the EHUV model, outlining the steps municipalities can take to initiate sustainable development in their jurisdictions. This would include energy efficiency audits, financial support, planning, marketing, lifestyle choices, etc.

8.0 DRAFT BUDGET

Web design	\$10,000 - \$15,000
Launch/hospitality	10,000
Wire services	3,000
Animation/DVD	25,000 (in-kind?)
Advertising	20,000
Strategic Communication Advice	20,000
Media Kit Development	3,000
Event Photographers	2,000
Media Scanning Services	3,000
Communications Assistant (pt. time)	40,000

Total: \$141,000 (not including C3 manual + subsequent years)

9.0 EVALUATION

Measuring the impact/value of communication efforts is crucial but can be complex and time consuming. Areas of measurement could include media coverage, web hits, polling, awards and requests by industry, government and the public for replication in other jurisdictions. Climate Change Central recommends a communications consultant be contracted to develop measurement tools and, depending on resources, conduct the measurement.

APPENDIX ONE

STRATHCONA COUNTY BRAND ANALYSIS

Heather Nutma, Communications Associate, Climate Change Central

1.0 INTERNAL ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

Strathcona County's innovative approach to addressing its growth with a focus on sustainability has the potential to receive attention not only provincially and nationally but internationally as well. A partnership with WWF in particular, could play a significant role in garnering this international recognition.

From a development perspective, it appears this project's partnerships are operating effectively to establish concrete plans and resources, such as the update newsletter for Centre in the Park, are securing strong community buy-in.

Although the passion for this sustainable community is evident in all of those working on this project, a clear branding of sustainability is not being realized with slogans such as "creating a heart for our community." In addition, no link has yet been established to connect the Centre in the Park and Emerald Hills initiatives. To make the name Strathcona County synonymous with sustainability, every graphic, slogan and message must have an obvious sustainable focus.

2.0 BRANDING CONSIDERATIONS

Before moving forward with identity brands for both Centre in the Park and Emerald Hills, Strathcona County needs to develop an overarching brand to represent the county's vision for a sustainable future in every initiative it undertakes – not just these two projects. The slogan connected to this branding concept should be visible throughout the county (i.e. road signs, government documents etc.).

Independent brands, including slogans, that connect to the overarching brand for the county should than be developed for Centre in the Park and Emerald Hills. Currently, sustainability does not have a strong focus in the Centre in the Park brand. Before moving forward with a brand for Emerald Hills, this focus should be incorporated into existing materials.

2.1 OVERALL BRAND

The overall branding of Strathcona County should be broad enough to encompass any environmental initiative such as a recycling campaign or a low-flow toilet rebate. Connecting a brand that focuses on creating a sustainable future to each initiative will create a sense of unity and flow to these efforts.

Some examples developed by C3 to help spur a brainstorm session are listed below.

Redefining community one block at a time
Redefining community. Revitalizing Strathcona County
In order to lead, you must first break away.

2.2 CENTRE IN THE PARK BRANDING

Because Strathcona County has never had a true downtown, it is quite fitting to brand Centre in the Park as the heart of the community. However, incorporating the concept of “green” sustainability into the slogan and logo of Centre in the Park will enrich this branding effort. A potential slogan to incorporate both sustainability and the concept of downtown as the heart could include: Greening the heart of our community, the green heart of our community. Centre in the Park: The green heart of our community. The vision of our tomorrow.

2.3 EMERALD HILLS URBAN VILLAGE BRANDING

For Emerald Hills, playing off the concept of a shining green emerald could be quite effective. One suggestion for a logo developed by C3 would be to have an emerald green house standing out between white houses with hills in the background. Hopefully this concept will at least trigger some further brainstorming about what the Emerald Hills “look” and brand could be.

3.0 KEY MESSAGES

Although some messages will continue throughout the duration of both the Centre in the Park and Emerald Hills projects, others will be appropriate for certain phases of the projects. For example, a message about the project’s successful partnerships will be an ongoing message, whereas a message about aesthetics will become more important when house sales begin.

In addition, because of the multiple partners participating in this project, two to three project-wide key messages should be developed with sub-messages in place to meet the diverse communications needs of each partner. For example, Christenson Developments would probably focus more on the actual sustainable construction of the project and Strathcona County would likely discuss how the project is moving the community towards a sustainable future. Taking the time to develop these sub-messages will help each party stay focused on the overall communication objectives, eliminate unwanted “surprise” comments from partners and ensure consistency in messaging throughout the project and marketing campaign.

Because the physical distance between Centre in the Park and Emerald Hills can create confusion as to how the projects are connected, a core key message explaining the link must be repeated throughout the project.

These key messages will be used with all affected audiences, including media. Below

are some examples of key messages that could be used by the project team.

3.1 PROJECT-WIDE KEY MESSAGES

Pre-completion:

- 1.** Our goal is to change the way people think about community. Ultimately we want our success with building a sustainable community to be replicated across the county.
- 2.** This is not just about investing in sustainable technologies. It's about creating a greater quality of life for Canadians. It's about creating more efficient, healthier and more comfortable communities that address Canada's need to preserve its natural resources.
- 3.** Partnerships are critical when building something that's far outside the box of conventional design. It's really about government, developers and residents coming together and listening to each other's concerns and opportunities.
- 4.** Industry, government, universities and residents are collaborating to develop sustainable communities first in Strathcona County and then across the country.
- 5.** Strathcona County has never had a downtown. Centre in the Park will not only become the heart of the community, it will also stand as a motivating reminder of Strathcona County's vision for a sustainable future.

LINK...

- 6.** The second planned sustainable community called Emerald Hills will be the crucial demonstration of our ability to viably replicate the sustainable principles used to develop Centre in the Park.

Post-completion:

- 7.** We are changing the way people think about community and now look forward to working with our partners to replicate the success of the County of Strathcona's sustainable communities in other parts of the country.
- 8.** Partnerships are critical when building something that's far outside the box of conventional design. It's really about government, developers and residents coming together and listening to each other's concerns and opportunities.
- 9.** This was a huge accomplishment for the County of Strathcona. Developing a sustainable community has made us more aware of our consumption of natural resources and will continue to demonstrate its financial, environmental and social benefits.

10. This is not just about investing in sustainable technologies. It's about creating a greater quality of life for Canadians. It's about creating more efficient, healthier and more comfortable communities that address Canada's need to preserve its natural resources.
11. We have successfully demonstrated that developing sustainable communities is a viable option for every municipality. We hope what we have developed in the County of Strathcona will get other municipalities thinking about the potential to incorporate sustainable principles into their developments.

3.2 PARTNERS SUB-MESSAGES

Pre-completion:

1. ***Strathcona County:*** This is not just about investing in sustainable technologies. It's about creating a greater quality of life for our Strathcona County residents. It's about creating a more efficient, healthier and more comfortable community.
2. ***Strathcona County:*** While the current focus is on developing two sustainable communities, Strathcona County continues to look for opportunities to expand our efforts. Our focus on education for school children, residents, industry and municipalities will now start to pick up steam.
3. ***Christenson Developments:*** We want to be a leader in developing sustainable communities so working with Strathcona County has been a natural fit. The learning curve with developing a sustainable community is significant but the opportunities to implement these learnings into other projects are huge.
4. ***Christenson Developments:*** Sustainable communities will be the conventional community of tomorrow so it is important that we start learning what sustainable development means today.

Post-completion:

5. ***Strathcona County:*** We will continue to move Strathcona County towards a more sustainable future. The opportunities are endless and the educational focus of our plan will be ongoing. We're definitely not stopping here.
6. ***Christenson Developments:*** We have successfully demonstrated that developing sustainable communities is a viable option for other municipalities. We hope that what we have developed in Strathcona County will get other municipalities thinking about the potential to incorporate sustainable principles into their developments.